



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Two Juveniles Charged with Arson, Hate Crime

Howard County Police have arrested two juveniles and charged them with a series of racially-motivated arson and destruction cases targeting Asian business owners. The boys, both 15, one from Columbia and the other from ElkrIDGE, are facing 25 counts, including arson, destruction of property and a hate crime.

The county's fire investigation team, comprised of investigators from the police and fire departments, began investigating a series of arson cases in early July at the Great Wall restaurant in the 6300 block of Washington Blvd. in ElkrIDGE. The owner reported four incidents in which fireworks or fires were set on the roof of the business. In one case, someone left a note telling the owner to relocate the restaurant. The owner also reported in early August that a dumpster at the business was set on fire.

The same night as the dumpster fire, someone threw a rock through the window of the Dollar Store located across the street from the restaurant. The next night, the Dollar Store's window was broken again and the Great Wall's roof was set on fire. After these incidents, the owner of the Great Wall received multiple phone calls that threatened more fires if the business didn't relocate. The owners of both businesses are Asian.

Police conducted surveillance in the area and saw two teenage boys throw a rock into a residential community. The boys matched a photo taken by the restaurant owner of two boys who had thrown eggs at him in an earlier incident. A detective stopped the boys, identified them and asked for their phone numbers. The boys provided cell phone numbers that matched numbers captured by caller-ID during the threatening calls to the restaurant. Both boys were arrested and, after further investigation, charged with:

- two counts of first degree arson;
- three counts of second degree arson;
- four counts of fourth degree malicious burning;
- four counts of threatening arson;
- two counts of setting fire to trash containers;
- one count of harassment of a person for ethnic reasons;
- one count of conspiracy;
- two counts of malicious destruction of property over \$500; and
- six counts of malicious destruction of property under \$500.

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